

3 Day Sahara Desert Tour to Erg Chebbi



Highlights

Leave your base in Marrakech and be whisked off to visit the Erg Chebbi dunes on this three-day Sahara Desert Tour. You'll ride camels at sunset, sleep under the stars in the desert and visit the World Heritage site of Ait Benhaddou.

South East Morocco has just two areas of classic Saharan Sand Dunes, or 'ergs'; Erg Chegaga and Erg Chebbi. Folklore has it that the latter was sent by God to the townspeople of Merzouga as a punishment for turning away hungry travellers. Whether you choose to believe it or not, the range, measuring around 22km long by 5km wide make for an impressive site. With the highest dunes measuring approximately 150m high, the sight of the undulating Ergs appearing out of the rocky desert is guaranteed to leave you breathless.

This three day Sahara Desert tour departs from Marrakech from where you will head out over the High Atlas Mountains on the Tizi-n-Tichka mountain pass. The road reaches up to about 2,600m, providing breathtaking views of the surrounding areas. Once over the other side of the mountains, you will stop for lunch and a chance to explore the UNESCO World Heritage site of Ait Benhaddou. This is an ancient fortified city containing countless kasbahs and has been the atmospheric subject of numerous hollywood movies (The Mummy, Gladiator, Alexander, Lawrence of Arabia...) Heading deeper into the rocky plateau, you will spend the night at Dades Gorge, a spectacular deep-sided canyon.

The following day of your tour sees you heading into the rocky desert, stopping off en-route to explore another geographical phenomenon - Todra Gorge. Once you arrive at the desert gateway town of Merzouga, you will pause to pick up supplies and will then drive a further hour to meet your camels and guide. You will then mount your camels and trek across the dunes for an hour and a half to the desert camp, where you will spend the night enjoying a traditional Moroccan meal and dining under the stars. The next morning, you will get up very early and trek by camel to watch the sun rising over the dunes. After a hearty breakfast, you will get back into the car and drive back to Marrakech.

Is it for me?

This tour is perfect for those who are short of time, but eager to have the chance to get out to Saharan dunes and experience camping under the stars. There is no heavy trekking involved so it is very much accessible to all. Accommodation is simple and local - and when you are in the desert it is down right basic, with a basic shared toilet (no shower).

You don't need any prior riding experience for the camel riding. Camels are lead by a guide, so you just need to hold on. Rides are timed for sunrise and sunset so that you are not riding at the hottest time of the day.

Prepare yourself for the fact that the dunes are about a 10 hour drive from Marrakech, Whilst the journey is definitely worth it - and there will be stops along the way - you will be in a car for long periods of time. If you travel in the summer, when the days are longer, there will be more chances for stops along the way, but in the winter, with shorter days, there will be less time for stops. The car will have air conditioning. If you have a bit more time to spare, you might want to consider a [slightly longer trip](#).

Accommodation

Prices from

303 GBP (3 days) per person

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You'll spend the first night in a hotel in Dades Gorge. Rooms are twin or double and have ensuite facilities. Just don't expect anything too luxurious, think 2/3-star rather than 5-star.

Out in the desert, you will be sleeping in a traditional Berber Camp. Facilities are very basic - you will sleep on thin mats on the ground and will eat your dinner by starlight, sitting in rugs around a low table. Facilities in the desert are basic. There is a shared toilet and no shower.

Food-wise, you'll get your breakfasts and dinners included, but you'll have to find your own lunch - there are plenty of places to stop along the way for lunch. In terms of cuisine, expect tasty traditional Berber and Moroccan dishes.

Itinerary

Please note itineraries are provided for guidance only and are subject to change if the weather or other factors change.

Day 1: You will be picked up from your accommodation in Marrakech at 9.00am. Drive to the World Heritage Site of Ait Benhaddou, crossing the spectacular Tizi n'Tichka Pass of the High Atlas mountains. You'll pass through lots of Berber villages, and once you're in the desert, you'll see riverside oases and barren hillsides dotted with kasbahs (fortified dwellings that house families and their livestock). Ait Benhaddou is an ancient fortified city containing countless kasbahs and has been the atmospheric subject of numerous hollywood movies (The Mummy, Gladiator, Alexander, Lawrence of Arabia...) You will be able to walk amongst the old buildings and walk to the top of the fortification if you have the energy. Later on, you'll head through the Valley of the Roses to Dades Gorge where you will enjoy a Moroccan dinner and evening at a small hotel with beautiful views of the Dades valley. Overnight in Dades. (Total driving time 4 - 5 hours)

Day 2: Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer from the Dades Valley to Todra Gorge - a massive fault dividing the High Atlas mountains, rising up 300 metres in a narrow valley with palmeries and Berber villages. After lunch you'll head further into the desert to the gateway town of Merzouga to pick up supplies for your desert trip. You will then drive on to a kasbah to pick up your camel. At sunset, you'll trek for an hour-and-a-half by camel to a Berber camp where you will enjoy a traditional Moroccan dinner, and sleep under the stars or in tents at a desert camp. (Total driving time 3 - 4 hours)

Day 3: Wake to a desert sunrise and then return to the kasbah by camel. You will then have a chance to freshen up and enjoy a breakfast. You will leave for Marrakech travelling across the High Atlas Mountains. You'll arrive in Marrakech in the evening, normally around 6.00pm. (Total driving time 9 - 10 hours)

You can see some more photos of the trip on our [blog](#)

Details

Getting there

Flying from the UK... Marrakech has an international airport (RAK) which is serviced by several airlines flying direct from the UK. The airport is about six kilometres outside the city centre and you can catch a taxi into the medina, or arrange a transfer through you riad.

From the South East:

Gatwick: Easy Jet, British Airways and Thomson

Heathrow: Bmi

Luton: Ryanair

Stansted: Ryanair

From the Midlands:

East Midlands: Ryanair

From the North:

Manchester: Easy jet and Thomson both have several departures a week.

From within Morocco.... If you would like to start or end this trip in Fes, please let us know. If you are planning to visit Essaouira, there are regular buses between the two cities - it takes about three hours and costs around £10

Joining Instructions... You will be picked up by local taxi from your hotel in Marrakech at 9.00am on the morning of your departure. If your flight arrives in Marrakech around 9.00 you can be picked up from the airport instead. Please remember to let us know where you are staying so that we can confirm these instructions. The tour normally finishes on the last day at around 5.00pm with a drop off in Marrakech. Pick up and drop off times can be adapted to meet incoming / outgoing flights.

Price includes

Transfers to/from Marrakech, half-board accommodation, services of an English-speaking tour guide, 4x4 with driver, camel ride and overnight camping in sand dunes.

Price details

Please enquire for prices for single travellers as we can often join you to an existing group at a reasonable price.

When is best

This tour is available throughout the year except during Ramadan, which in 2011 is the month of August. In the

summer, you can expect highs of up to 45C (although for the hottest parts of the day you will be in the car or in the shade). In the winter, lows at night can be down to -5, so a good sleeping bag is essential.

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed

Travellers should bring

General: - When you head out to the desert, you will leave your luggage behind at the Kasbah and will take a small bag of overnight essentials with you, please bring a small rucksack with you for these purposes. - Sleeping Bag (Or you can rent one. If you do decide to rent one, we suggest that you bring a sleeping bag liner with you - Sunglasses - Sun tan lotion - Towel - Ziplock bags (for keeping valuables sand-free in case there are sand storms) - Small torch / flash-light (small bicycle lights make good travelling torches)

Personal: - Moisturiser / lip balm with sunblock - Soap / shampoo / toothpaste / toothbrush etc - Wet-wipes

Clothing: - Sun hat - Warm hat (for the winter months) - Fleece & Warm clothes - We recommend that you wear long trousers when riding on the camels. - Sturdy Shoes - Hiking shoes / trainers are much easier to walk in on the sand, than flip flops or sandals. Money & Valuables: - There are banks and ATM's in the main towns along the way and most of the lunch stops will take credit cards. When you get to Merzouga, you will stop at a shop to buy water and any snacks you want for the overnight stop in the desert, so small cash would be useful. - We advise that you keep your valuables with you at all times. - Tips are not included in the price of the tour, but are always appreciated if you feel that you have received good service.

First aid: (Note, Make sure you use water proof labelling when re-packaging), Disinfectant cream / gel (Polysporin), Plasters, Ibuprofen (for pain, swelling), Diarrhoea medication (Imodium), Anti-histamine tablets, Aloe Vera gel (for burns), Cold medication – Tylenol / Echinacea / zinc lozenges, Tweezers

Reviews (4)

Reviews of this experience

“ Overall tour was fantastic, our tour guide was really really friendly and made a big effort to ensure we got to see the key attractions on the road to the Sahara, very enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The guides in the Sahara were equally good, overall a great experience and one of the best activities we did in Morocco. ”

warren gregson reviewing 3 Day Sahara Desert Tour to Erg Chebbi

“ My thoughts on the trip was that it was over all an amazing experience. The Erg Chebbi trip was the most enjoyable part of our stay in Morocco, Im glad we booked it through yourself as everything ran smoothly and we feel we got an excellent service. We heard some bad experiences of similar trips but were a lot cheaper so I think you get what you pay for. ”

KateThorburn reviewing 3 Day Sahara Desert Tour to Erg Chebbi

“ Trip to Erg Chebbi

What a really wonderful trip – many thanks to everyone involved in making it happen. Riding over dunes in the desert at sunset has to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, watching the sun going down behind the orange glowing sand and crescent shaped shadows. I found, to my great relief, that camels are actually quite cooperative animals – or maybe that was down to our guide, Zaieed, who led them patiently for an hour, until we reached our tent. Then a delicious tagine, cooked on the spot, followed by sleeping under the brightest moon and stars imaginable. To top it all, we set off (again guided by Zaieed) in the morning while it was still dark so that we could park our camels on the side of a dune so we could clamber up and watch the sun rise. Pure magic.

It was a long drive down to the desert from Marrakech, but we stopped off at some fascinating places along the way, and enjoyed getting a feel for Moroccan villages after the bright lights of Marrakech. And the drive was worth every minute for such a wonderful experience. ”

lizsweetman reviewing 3 Day Sahara Desert Tour to Erg Chebbi

“ Firstly, you guys at Tourdust- what can I say really?! perfect service, informative, timely, reasonably priced etc etc Can't fault you, thanks so much, i'm really glad we didn't leave it to our Riad to book or just risk someone selling tours on the side of the road when we got there! The few extra quid was very well spent.

Mohammed and Aztat Tours- we had 2 guides (just for Andy and !!) the whole time. Met us at our front door and dropped us off practically at the next front door. EXTREMELY sensitive to our wimpy British needs (always checking we were cool enough, had enough water, wanted to take pics, stop for lunch, loos etc) They couldn't have been more thoughtful, even moreso considering

they were both without food and water all day because of Ramadan.

The tour was very comprehensive- mountains, gorges, the desert and other stops like fossil factories, film studios and various places of interest along the way. The dessert was an INCREDIBLE experience, the most bizarre silence i've ever experienced and I now know camels regurgitate their food and eat it as mine did this for the entire trip back (rather nice at 5am!)

Things that may be useful in terms of other clients doing the same tour and asking questions: we had no idea we would be travelling quite so far, so although the first and second day were fine and split up with visits and obviously a night in a hotel, the full journey back on the 3rd day was a marathon. I think we stopped twice for the loo and once for lunch in almost 12 hours because there was so far to go.

We also had no idea we'd be leaving our guides once we got on the camels, and trekking 4km to the camp. Our Berber 'host' there was amazing, the tagine the best we had the whole holiday and the 4 other guests a real nice bunch. But we then trekked back at 5am to see the sunrise. Again, a fab experience but we were in shock when we were told at camp we'd be getting up before 5am and going back on camels as 1- Camels are the most uncomfy beasts ever, and 2- We were absolutely knackered!

Also, the sleeping in the desert- we had packed a fleece and our toothbrushes along with wipes medication other items on the list etc. The torch was the most valuable item listed, we would have been lost without it! But anything other than maybe medication and wipes is pointless as there are NO facilities whatsoever, just a loo in a tent. We slept in our clothes and went back in them the next day, there's no point doing anything else really. It is a complete myth that it gets cold in the desert- it was a good 30 degrees all through the night with no wind whatsoever and the camp has thin mattresses and sheets to use if needed so no need for sleeping bag hire either, it was all just extra stuff to lug around. Our guide told us it very rarely gets cold in the desert and this is at the time of year when they move their camp out anyway so no-one would be staying there, doing tours etc ”

Elena reviewing 3 Day Sahara Desert Tour to Erg Chebbi